

Why Barack Obama Needs a Whuppin

Written by BAR executive editor Glen Ford ID3721
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Barack Obama's candidacy for president reveals critical fissures in the historical African American worldview, forcing Black citizens and activists to make a choice: will we support a cosmetic change in regime that is no more than skin deep - endorsing the ruling structure because it has a Black face - or continue on the long journey to self-determination, true social democracy and peace. Obama, the political twin of Hillary Clinton and the corporate Democratic Leadership Council her husband helped found, is determined to liquidate Black politics as an independent force in the United States, having already proclaimed, "There is no Black America."

"Obama personifies the definitive end of Black organized struggle in the United States."

Barack Obama is the antithesis of Black Power, a man who promises with every word he speaks, with every nuance of phrase and body language, and through his voting record as a U.S. Senator, that he personifies the definitive end of Black organized struggle in the United States - a unilateral surrender to white racism. This is his appeal to the white masses: that they will no longer be challenged to confront history, or to relinquish privilege in the present.

Obama's siren song to African Americans is of an entirely different nature. He does not have to sing it; we provide the music, ourselves. The lyrics and melody are actually alien to Obama, but he has heard them off and on in his strange sojourn through life, and senses their power to sway us. He understands that most of us will demand nothing from him - not even elemental allegiance. His "Black" flank, he knows, is covered, while his white "progressive" flank is neutralized and confused by Black failure to recoil at his betrayals of the most basic elements of social democracy. The field is wide open to the greatest opportunist to emerge from melanin-rich ranks in the New Millennium.

Obama has already cashed in on his "Race, but not *really*, Card" - to the tune of \$25 million dollars in [contributions](#) in the first

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three months of this year, three-quarters of it from corporations. This does not happen by accident. Since setting foot in the U.S. Senate, Obama has directed his entire message machine to the task of convincing corporate America that he is a friend who can be counted on to leave the actual Power Game in their hands. One of his first votes was to transfer most class action suits to federal courts, where multi-billion-dollar companies found guilty of race, gender or general employee abuse are fined the equivalent of the millionaire CEO's latest weekend at the casinos in Monaco. In the process of taking class action suits out of state courts, where the penalties to offending corporations have historically been much harsher, Obama voted against an amendment to put a cap of 30 percent on credit card debt charges. A fraction of that multi-billion dollar gift to the most unproductive sector of the economy wound up in his campaign coffers.

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The alienated man from Kansas, Hawaii, Indonesia and Harvard has not skipped a beat in his pursuit of Power Approval. He stood down while only California Senator Barbara Boxer stood up to challenge the theft of Black voting rights in the 2004 election. He coddled American Manifest Destiny queen Condoleezza Rice and Bush Supreme Court nominees, while doing nothing - absolutely *nothing* - to materially aid Katrina victims. He has stuck like Crazy Glue to positions on the Iraq war and health care that are practically indistinguishable from Hillary Clinton's - and in no way threaten the military-industrial complex or health care-insurance industries. Obama vows to add 100,000 more troops to the U.S. aggression and occupation force, to be deployed...wherever his masters want them to go.

Obama is a company man. He knows the language, the subtle and overt signals, and emits them like a beacon. Ruling circles have gotten the message, and that is why corporate media have made him a contender, and corporate billfolds have financed him. The "skinny kid" made his bones at the Democratic National Convention, in August, 2004, while he was still an Illinois senatorial candidate - a shoo-in against the hopeless and deranged Black Republican Alan Keyes. Obama put all white fears to rest: "There is no white America. There is no black America. There is no Latino America. There is no Asian America. There is only the United States of America." Hallelujah!

Therefore, there is no specific oppression of Black people in America (carried out by whites), and there is no Black polity worth paying attention to. *Voila*, the problem of centuries is solved!

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"Obama vows to add 100,000 more troops to the U.S. aggression and occupation force."

The litany of Obama's subsequent transgressions against the entirety of Black struggle is too long to recount in this article, and can only be understood as methodical elements of a studied plan to eliminate race as a subject of debate in American political life. Obama is the NOT-Black candidate, who just looks Black, and will absolve white folks - like a priest behind a screen - of historical, present, and future sins. He will integrate the mythical American narrative, washing it clean of real facts by his very presence and gleaming smile. He is happy. White folks are happy. Blacks are happy. Oh, happy days!

The Internal Enemy

In his journey to personal identity - dishonestly but expertly packaged for white and corporate audiences in his two books - Obama learned a salient and elemental fact of Black life: we want recognition by the nation as a whole, and some connection to the national narrative. African Americans have claimed at least [five U.S. presidents](#) - Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Warren Harding, and Calvin Coolidge - as "soul brothers" in blood, alleging they have Black ancestors. It does not matter that none of them, including Lincoln, thought of Black people as equals or even, in some cases, human. Such is the hunger.

"Obama has become a great presence that threatens the very fabric of Black politics."

We at Black Agenda Report are not immune to the illness. While our team was operating out of Black Commentator, in 2003, Bruce Dixon and I discovered that Obama was listed as a member of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), the corporate-funded rightwing of the party, created by white southern Democrats (Bill Clinton, Al Gore) for the purpose of blunting Black and labor influence in the party's affairs. Obama was at the time a national nobody, not ranked as a front-runner in the Illinois senatorial primary. We called him on his alleged affiliation with the DLC, which was posted for all to see. He claimed to know nothing about it - a transparent lie. But we gave the "brother" a pass, and engaged him in a dialogue.

There followed a month-long series of interchanges - [June 5](#) , [June 12](#) , [June 19](#) , [June 26](#) , 2003 - in which Obama danced like Mr. Bojangles to get around the issues at hand. Was he a DLC Democrat, by affiliation or political affinity? Finally, tiring of the charade and the reflexive

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spin from Obama's mouth, Dixon and I compiled three questions to the wannabe senator, the answers to which would determine if he

should

be in the DLC and, therefore, unworthy of our support. Obama, a genius at double-speak, fudged all three, on the Iraq war, universal health care, and NAFTA/so-called free trade.

We gave him a pass, and said he was clean, although both of us knew by then he was an inveterate liar and evader. He had actually flunked the "bright line" test. Neither of us wanted to be the ones to put a damper on an up-and-coming Black star. We understood that our people didn't want crabs in the barrel, pulling brothers down, or the appearance of it.

We apologize, to our people and to history.

Since that time as a nobody, Obama has become a great presence that threatens the very fabric of Black politics, having declared there is no such thing. At a recent gathering of Black trade unionists who support the most left-wing social democratic agenda that is allowed in American political discourse, Obama was treated as a savior - despite the fact that his applause-filled speech endorsed almost none of the specific planks of Black trade unionists. He had fudged again, and gotten away with it. No white man could pull it off, but Obama did, and entertained fans for an hour afterwards, taking pictures with folks who wanted to show their grandchildren that they had been in the presence of the next Black president.

He is a knife in our heart.

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